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[P. 269-C]

only for certain purposes, reveals at once a lack of interest in the past which is in accord with the apparent shortness of memory among these Pygmies, particularly noticeable when an investigator tries to construct some sort of genealogy. For me it heightens my suspicion of such genealogies given by a people who at times are only too willing to please by inventing totally fictitious names. The legends prove singularly unrewarding to anyone seeking some evidence of a lineage system. If they represent anything, they represent a people who are wholly absorbed in the present. If we accept this evidence, we can look for its consequences in the magico-religious life of the Mbuti as well as in other spheres.

Also with reference to the Mbuti magico-religious system, there is possibly some significance in the tendency to emphasize the natural order of events in the legends relating to social life. The ideal represented in the legend is the normal; consequently, these particular legends seem singularly unimaginative. They read like reports of actual occurrences. A certain amount of cleverness is normal, but an excess of it (when the term becomes best translated as "trickery") is abnormal and leads us, as we have seen, into

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the world of the supernatural. The Pygmy is anxious to preserve the normal, the *status quo*. Although one could hardly determine this with any certainty from the legends alone, they certainly confirm the notion, which is of particular significanec with reference to Mbuti religious thought. We return briefly to this point below. 538 183

The second section dealing with social relations also reveals a center of interest on food, the importance of the food quest being implied repeatedly. Also emphasized is the importance of cooperation, not only between members of the same family, but between all members of the hunting band. These legends tell us that vice and virtue are scarcely understood as such, that the dominating quality is cleverness, with its converse, stupidity. But, as pointed out, this is a borderline world. Whereas cleverness may be of use to a Pygmy in his normal everyday life, it is really a quality associated with his dealings with the animal and supernatural worlds. In fact, one legend, not mentioned, quite distinctly tells us that in everyday life it is not good to be too clever, but better to be normal. An elephant hunter who loses his normality (by failing to accept food offered to him, and failing to join in the conversation) is 538 181 [476] [577] 538 181 183

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538 promptly deserted as being unsafe company. So
181 we might gather that in daily life normality is
• 183 the ideal, and, when the supernatural (including animals, regarded as possessed of supernatural powers), is dealt with, cleverness is dominant.

538 From the second section of legends we can
888 finally glean some information from the treatment of old age. Two things emerge: first, old age is associated with extra cleverness, approaching trickery; second, we find Pygmy realism emerging again when old age is accompanied by disability. Either way, old age is a dangerous condition. In this particular band it is perhaps significant that the leaders of the group are not old, but are the active—the "great hunters."

538 Animals, like food, enter into the majority of
825 legends, and in some cases they seem to be regarded merely as animals. But more often the trickery of the animal is emphasized and, consequently, its association with the supernatural. In the third kind of legends, those dealing with the supernatural, we find animals in almost every one.

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CHAPTER 9

The Life Cycle

DAILY LIFE

621
626
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The life of the nuclear family is so closely interwoven with that of the band that it is not always easy or possible to separate which activities and occasions are the concern of which. The difference is only one of degree, for even the most insignificant and routine action in the daily life of the family is potentially of major concern to the band as a whole. Thus a man seeking to borrow his brother's pipe may provide the occasion for a petty jealousy to flare up and divide the brothers, if not the camp (this case is quoted in full in the section on Government). In fact, in a society where there is no formal legal institution for the redress of wrongs, individuals resort to self-help and forcibly bring their case to public attention by deliberately provoking an incident. It is important then that there should be a pattern of behavior that is generally accepted, and which covers every conceivable activity so that there may be some direction and constancy in the ensuing discussion. The degree of "general acceptance" is of course not of such rigidity as to preclude the flexibility necessary for the pursuit of justice. But beneath the evident ambivalence there is a recognizable pattern of things that should or should not be done. This pattern is sometimes most plain in matters that seem most trivial, such as the insistence that embers that fall from the fire should not simply be scooped or pushed back, but should be picked up and placed on top of the fire; the feeling that anyone passing through a stream should wash himself, or at least a part of himself, even if he crossed another turn of the same stream a few yards back. If anyone is silent and untalkative, this is considered unusual and unfortunate. If one trips up accidentally, or stumbles even while crossing the camp, without harming anyone or anything, there is a distinct air of reproach among the onlookers. Such patterns of generally accepted behavior

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are contradicted every day without necessarily causing any mention, but in the event of anything more serious happening later, the earlier incidents will be recalled and made into an issue that successfully embroils, ultimately, the entire camp.

But more curious than this slight emphasis on normal, or mildly abnormal and trivial patterns is the lack of emphasis at times where one would have thought the occasion to be of major concern to the band. Birth and marriage, for instance, provoke little comment, and concern primarily the nuclear families and not the band. The relationship between these particular attitudes and the nonlineal and fluid composition of the band is plain. The constant movement of families from one band to another, alone, opens up different and important avenues for recruitment that has the advantage of being selective.

With this in mind, let us look first at the daily life of the Mbuti, briefly, for it is of little structural significance, then at the life cycle.

Among both net-hunters and archers five days out of seven are likely to include some hunting. Even though it would be possible for the Mbuti to kill a surplus of game and dry the meat and store it for their own future use, as indeed they do for the benefit of the villagers, such measures are no more to their taste than to their advantage. On a hunting day the family rises at dawn, the mother and her older daughters who are at the age of puberty go to the stream to wash themselves and bring back water for drinking and cooking. The menfolk go to a different part of the stream, and generally slightly later. The older men might be excessively lazy and use the water brought back for drinking as bath water.

While the women cook the light morning meal and set food aside for taking with them on the hunt, the men shake out and inspect their nets, bows and arrows, their sons helping them or simply looking on. If the forest is dry, the hunt may start leaving within an hour of dawn, otherwise it may not leave until midday. Usually it sets off about two hours after sunrise and may return anytime between midday and dusk. There is no particular order for leaving the camp, but the youths usually go ahead, and not far away they light a fire at the base of a small tree, as an invocation to the forest for a good hunt. Men and women alike stop by the fire on their way, but with no ceremony. It does serve, however, as a place for a more cordial exchange of greetings than generally takes place in the still sleepy camp.

Back in the camp some old grandparents, or maybe only a handful

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of youths, will be left in charge of the camp and of any children that elect to stay behind. Any child old enough to make the decision does so himself. If his parents do not want to be bothered with him he has a wide range of classificatory mothers and fathers to call on, or if he is old enough he will simply join his own age group and set off with them. Girls always go with the women; boys go with their fathers, youths may go with their fathers or on their own. If a father has a particularly long net he may welcome an extra spear or bow and arrow nearby, and his adolescent sons serve in this capacity.

The hunt is described more fully in Chapter Ten. Here it is only necessary to point out that among the net-hunters, where a net is owned by married men or by extremely rare, gifted bachelor hunters (youths), the hunt effectively divides itself into nuclear family groups but not into nuclear families, for each family, during the hunt, is itself divided by age and sex. The family-owned nets stretch out in a long semicircle, end to end, and the women act as beaters, forming a corresponding semicircle opposite. But each net is utterly dependent on the others, as is each beater, and it is the co-operative aspect of the age group that is emphasized, rather than the distinctness of each family. The division of spoils similarly stresses band rather than family values, and the hunting songs and dances that take place after, and sometimes before, the hunt further illustrate that the hunt is considered an affair of the band as a whole.

When the hunt returns to camp there is immediate excitement as those who stayed behind crowd around for tales of all that happened, and maybe for a few tidbits of raw meat. In the confusion, men and women alike, but particularly women, may be seen furtively concealing some of their spoils under the leaves of their roofs, or in empty pots nearby. For although there will have been some sharing on the scene, there is always more back in the camp, and family loyalty is not that subject to band loyalty that there is no cheating.

The food is prepared and cooked right away, and while this is being done a hunting dance may take place, in which men and women and children all take part. This dance is frequently imitative of hunting activities, with older people taking the part of the animals hunted. Any unusual event of the day's hunt may be reenacted, and this is also an occasion where the sanction of ridicule may be applied to any hunter, male or female, who is considered to have been unsatisfactory. It is not uncommon for a husband to lead a dance ridiculing a wife who, through her laziness as a beater, spoiled his chances.

2: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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band to the village as its *capita* or *sultani*. In the Epulu band, Njobo was an undisputed great hunter, knew the territory as well as anyone and had killed four elephants single-handed. He was a good enough Mbuti not to attempt to dominate any hunting discussion in the forest, merely to take a normal part. If he ever appeared to be overly aggressive or insistent he was shouted down and ridiculed, although highly popular. He was also the one chosen to represent the band to the villagers. Ekianga, on the other hand, was less generally popular and was the source of some friction, having three wives (one the sister of another prominent member of the band), but he was a fine hunter, endowed with exceptional physical stamina, and he too knew the territory well. Even at the height of his unpopularity he was one of the most effective "leaders" of the hunt. So was Nikiabo, a youth who had achieved some notoriety by killing a buffalo when barely out of childhood. Although a bachelor, he had a net of his own and took a prominent part in all hunting discussions. Makubasi, a young married hunter, was also accorded special respect because of his hunting prowess and his physical strength, combined with his knowledge of the territory. But while these four can be singled out as exceptional, they could either separately or together be outvoted by the rest of the hunters. On such occasions they were compelled either to give their assent to the popular decision or to refrain from joining the hunt that day. None of them had the slightest authority over any others. Nor was any moral pressure brought to bear in influencing a decision through personal considerations or respect. The only such moral consideration ever mentioned was that when the band arrived at a decision, it was considered "good," and that it would "please the forest." Anyone not associating himself with the decision was, then, likely to displease the forest, and this was considered "bad." Any individual intent on strengthening his own argument might appeal to the forest on grounds that his point of view was "good" and "pleasing"; only the ultimate general decision, however, would determine the validity of his claim.

Finally, it has to be pointed out that while the forest is appealed to almost as an arbiter, and is considered as imposing the standards and even the leadership, which all Mbuti follow, this only holds good in the forest, where the forest directly "feeds its children." Once in the village, actions concerning the village are never judged by whether or not they are pleasing to the forest; a totally different set of values pertains.

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29. A girl returning from the village related how there was an administrator there who took her photograph. Masisi demanded the money, and the girl said she did not ask for any. Masisi's wife said the girl was a fool, that she could have got fifty francs. In fact, she was a thief because she deprived everyone of cigarettes. The girl was still standing up where she arrived in camp, and Masisi's wife went up and forced her to sit down, and thrust her private parts into the girl's face as a gesture of contempt. The girl's parents said nothing.

30. A man burped loudly during the evening meal, and brought forth insults from all sides that would have developed into a fight had Moké not taken the *banja* sticks and started beating them, a sign for the *molimo* singing to begin.

31. A girl, decorated with leaves stuck in her bark cloth, was dancing vigorously and some of the leaves kept falling out. She blamed the younger children and started beating them until they fled, crying. Nobody interfered.

32. Amabosu, for no known reason, refused to allow his wife to move the fire from their hearth when changing camp. She went to her brother's hut and sat there sulking for nearly a whole day. Amabosu, fed by his mother, paid no attention.

33. Occasionally, however, even the most trivial origins can lead to a serious and lasting rift. Such a dispute, described more fully in *The Forest People* (Chapter 6), involved two brothers, Aberi and Masalito. It started when Masalito went to visit his brother on a rainy day. Masalito was in the main camp, Aberi in Cephu's camp. Aberi was asleep, and his wife insulted Masalito twice, first by refusing to smoke the same pipe, second by offering him an old and dirty pipe-stem to take back to the main camp with him. This led to a fight between the two brothers which was temporarily healed by the force of ridicule levelled against Aberi, and further subdued by the action of the *molimo* in beating Masalito's hut as a sign of the displeasure of the forest.

However, the bad feeling remained, if hidden, until Aberi's death.

DISPUTES CONCERNING THEFT

Theft, apart from the kind practiced by Pepei, was unknown except in the village context. Sometimes when Pepei was caught he was thrashed; on the other hand, sometimes he was tolerantly laughed at and allowed to go his way. There was once, however, a curious case that was never settled.

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34. During a hunt Ekianga's unmarried niece, Ekimanji, had charge of his two spears and lost these together with her own basket, full of meat. Her story was that she was standing about, waiting for the rest to join up after a beat, when she had to answer a call of nature. She went a few yards away, and on return found the two spears and the basket gone. She called out, and Masalito, who was nearby, came running over. She asked him to stand there while she went and searched, which she did. She could find no traces. He also searched, and neither could he. It then began to rain and they returned to camp.

The next day the hunt went back to the spot and searched all over but found nothing. They even repeated the hunt in the same spot, casting the nets and beating toward them. Nobody offered any suggestions as to what could have happened, other than that they must have been taken. Not a single individual was hinted at directly or indirectly. One of the hunters suggested it was a villager, for Mbuti don't steal, but everyone knew that no villager was anywhere about in the forest during the hunt. However, the explanation, weak as it was, was better than none and, if not accepted, it was certainly not denied. The matter was not mentioned again.

DISPUTES CONCERNING THE VILLAGE

35. It might be thought that the village would be a common source of dispute. Far from being so, the village most frequently occurs in disputes as above, as a means of ending a dispute without settling the blame on any Mbuti and thus hastening the process of fission. Even money is assimilated into the forest pattern of distribution of food, insofar as it is ever brought into the forest (see 29, above). The only real dispute over money in my records was because the money was received for a spear which had been stolen from one villager and sold back to another, and it was difficult to assess the correct apportionment of the "game" (a hundred francs) between the "hunters."

The village, however, was often being blamed for ill health, and with frequent justification, for sanitation, which was no problem for the Mbuti in the forest, was a major one in the village. The village also frequently took the blame for poor hunting, particularly if some individual or some group in the band (e.g., the women who did not beat) seemed to be genuinely to blame.

One dispute of major proportions, and one of the few which occasioned direct action, did, however, have its cause in the village. The

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patterns produce "features typical of the patrilineal band," for the patterns differ from group to group, and within each group from one time of the year to the next. At one time or another, each group, net-hunters or archers, will be able to present bands that resemble patrilineal units; at other times the same bands will be utterly nonlineal, even though the exploitative pattern may not have changed.

Nonetheless, the environment itself does play a vital structural role, and while not necessarily determining the exploitative activity, or the dependence of the Mbuti upon it, is determinant of their value system so long as that dependence is felt. For, feeling that way, regarding the forest as *ema* the provider, and as *eba* the ruler, believing that any deviation from the way of life ordained for them by the forest would be fatal, the Mbuti effect what control they can over their lives by a constant effort to "rejoice the forest."

Conceiving that the forest is intelligent, the Mbuti conceive that it is like them, and consequently the ideal that they hold for themselves is the ideal they attribute to the forest. While age and territory are effective in organizing the band, dividing it into significant units, binding it together as a whole, and determining the general nature of interpersonal relationships, the territory enlarged into the forest seen as mother and father acts as the ultimate sanction of all behavior. There are certain recognized forms of behavior that lead to a "good" band, and others that lead to a "bad" band. The appropriate positive and negative sanctions are formulated in such a way that all actions are either pleasing to the forest—leading to the ideal of *ekimi*, or quietness—or displeasing to the forest, leading to *akami*, or noise. (*Ekimi* and *akami* are, in practice, essential elements in determining the success or failure of the hunt.)

Thus it is recognized that cooperation is essential for the success of the hunt, so it is stated that laziness and aggressiveness and disputatiousness are all displeasing to the forest, leading to *akami* (as indeed they do). The *akami* is their own reward, for *akami* destroys the hunt and "kills" the Mbuti. On the contrary, to hunt well, to have a full stomach, to sing and dance, is to please the forest and lead to *ekimi*, or "quietness," and *ekimi* in turn brings good hunting, and is associated with singing and dancing and feasting.

Here is a very clear example of the closest possible association between religious belief and ethical behavior. The distinction made by Radcliffe-Brown (1952, p. 172) between law, morality and religion, upheld by legal sanctions, sanctions of public opinion, and religious

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bow and arrows and started to walk out of the camp. His son Makubasi, one of the hunters, called after him that he was going "emptily" (*ue ke bulé*)—using the KiNgwana word for "emptily," with its connotations of war—(See footnote to p. 295) and without reason. Makubasi pointed out that all the noise had ceased and that now there was *ekimi*, or quiet. Tungana stopped, listened, said that he did not want to kill the camp so he would come back, but from now on there must be nothing but *ekimi* and no more jumping in and out of his hearth, spoiling his food, destroying his fire.

Ekianga continued to sleep with Amabosu's sister, but Amabosu no longer beat Ekianga's sister in retaliation. On the contrary, even before Tungana's grumbling protests had died down, he was off getting some herbs to soothe his wife's wounds. And if the camp had been upset by noise rather than silence, the hunters would have killed it with more noise. The ultimate solution generally lies in the hands of the elders, but the process of restoring equilibrium is initiated by the hunters' fulfilling their duty of making noise. Thus though noise cannot be said to be good, its use (properly controlled) is recognized as having beneficial potentialities.

5. QUIET (*ekimi*) is not merely the opposite of noise; it is something else and it is the ultimate goal toward which life is directed. As with noise, its practical advantages are plain, particularly on the hunt. It is also recognized as an indication that all is well; a quiet camp is a camp untroubled by dissension, a quiet child is a well-fed child, and so forth. In the same way that noise is associated with heat, so is quiet associated with coolness, and this is generally a desirable quality, whereas heat is undesirable.[5] The plaintive cry of the elders when trying to stop an argument or settle a dispute is often "*Me oki akami, me toni akami; me kondi ekimi, ndura ekondi ekimi*" —"I hear noise, I refuse noise; I love quiet, the forest loves quiet."

The ideal is quiet, and quietness is associated with the forest. The concept is inseparable from the concept of joy, which is *ekimi mota*, or "powerful quietness." Joy is an intensification of quietness and is brought about by the occurrence of the norm: good hunting, good weather, good health, harmonious relations, plenty of children. These conditions do not always prevail, in which case active steps have to be taken to improve the hunt, to be less disputatious, to keep better health, to have more children, and to drive bad weather away. En-

[5] The village is in fact, as in thought, hot and noisy, whereas the forest is cool and quiet.

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deavor of this kind, however, is recognized as being fraught with difficulty, and there is another way that is both easier and more sure, for *ekimi mota* is produced by song. The process of "rejoicing the forest" is a process of creating *ekimi mota* where it does not exist, of intensifying mere *ekimi* through song.

The term for "rejoicing the forest" in the Epulu area is *bongisa ndura*. In KiNgwana the verb is either *furahisa* or *ponisa*, there being no precise equivalent to *bongisa*. *Furahisa* is closer to the English concept of joy, involving festivity; *ponisa*, however, means to cure. The KiNgwana words are both used by the Mbuti in this context, interchangeably, and the meaning of *bongisa* lies between them, derived as it is from *bonga*, meaning good, in an all-inclusive sense.

Perhaps the exact connotation of "rejoicing the forest" is best described by the process itself, which brings joy through joy. Singing gives the Mbuti intense satisfaction. They say it makes them feel good, in the sense of feeling joyful. The mood of song is joyful, even when it is a *molimo* song on the occasion of death. By creating a mood of joy within themselves the Mbuti convey that joy to the forest, which returns it, restoring *ekimi* or even *ekimi mota* to the camp. To describe song as mere "curing" would not quite cover the essential sharing process implied by the term *bongisa ndura*. Song is known, to the Mbuti, to have the infallible power of filling the forest with *ekimi mota*. It is sometimes described as being like the act of copulation in the moonlight, or wherever the individual talking feels that act to be the most intense and beautiful. The Mbuti say *"su bongisa ndura, ndura pisu ekimi"*—"we rejoice the forest, the forest gives us quiet." The distinction is simple, for joy is *ekimi mota*, an intensification of *ekimi*, and as such is not the norm and can only be temporary. Far more important to the Mbuti is that they should have, on a less temporary if less exalted level, the norm of *ekimi*.

While the forest cannot fail to be rejoiced by song, it may well, for one reason or another, be displeased, as a father may be displeased with his children (a perfectly common Mbuti metaphor), and withhold *ekimi* for a long time. The fact that singing brings joy to the Mbuti, filling them with *ekimi mota*, does not mean that it is not also hard work. For the forest is not content with one song. If singing is undertaken at all, and particularly if it is undertaken for purposes of restoring lost *ekimi* (i.e., if it is to be a *molimo* festival), it must be long and continuous. After a fest of singing every night, from shortly after dusk to an hour before sunrise, the Mbuti set off to hunt

heard such a Beautiful Song that he had to go and see who was singing. When he found the Bird he brought it back to the camp to feed it. His father was annoyed at having to give food to the Bird, but the son pleaded and the Bird was fed. The next day the Bird sang again; it sang the Most Beautiful Song in the Forest, and again the boy went to it and brought it back to feed it. This time the father was even more angered, but once again he gave in and fed the Bird. The third day (most Pygmy stories repeat themselves at least three times) the same thing happened. But this time the father took the Bird from his son and told his son to go away. When his son had left, the father killed the Bird, the Bird with the Most Beautiful Song in the Forest, and with the Bird he killed the Song, and with the Song he killed himself and he dropped dead, completely dead, dead for ever.

There are other legends about song, all telling how important it is, and I wondered just why. I looked at the others sitting with me around the kumamolimo. The flames from the fire flickered, lighting up the serious faces, shining brightly in their large, honest eyes. Some gazed straight into the fire, others leaned back and looked up into the trees as they sang. A few lay down on their hunting nets, but they were awake and they sang with the rest. Then I saw that Makubasi had his infant son on his lap, holding the boy tightly against him, wrapped in his powerful arms, rocking backward and forward. He was singing quietly, with his mouth up against his son's ear. The words of the song, like the words of most molimo songs, were few. They simply said, "The Forest is Good."

The Pygmies seemed bound by few set rules. There was a general pattern of behavior to which everyone more or less conformed, but with great latitude given and taken. Even on this occasion, when all women and children were supposed to be abed, if Makubasi felt like getting his son and singing to him at the kumamolimo, nobody objected or thought anything of it. Possibly this was because the

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765 882 534 533 growled and bellowed, and it rampaged around the camp, overturning any of the crude chairs that had been left outside, scattering the remains of fires in all directions, and beating on the roofs of huts to wake everyone up. Sometimes the youths seemed to divide at random into two sides and have a sort of tug of war with the trumpet, some trying to lead it in one direction, some in the other. It was not a real contest of strength, only acting. I wondered if perhaps this represented the original struggle for possession of the molimo, a struggle which some say was between Pygmies and animals, or others say was between men and women.

765 688 536 Ekianga took a prominent part in these morning affrays. He used to lead the youths, always holding two spears, one under each arm, pointing down at the ground as though he were looking for any sleeping person who should have been taking part in the activity. Sometimes he acted it out, stopping as though he saw an offender. Then he danced about and finally jabbed the spear blades at the earth.

765 688 • 183 115 123 I said to Kenge that this was what would happen to him if he went off and took my bed and blanket again before the evening singing had finished. Kenge laughed loudly and shouted across the camp what I had said. But then he became serious and said that he had been singing all the time until Moke had first said he wanted to go to sleep. "When the old men want to sleep it is all right for us to sleep," he said. Then he added laconically, "And of course if we are tired it is all right for us to go to sleep, naturally." He thought the conversation not very interesting, so he gave an animal call and ran with great leaps and bounds, like the antelope he was named for, across the camp to join in the tug of war.

765 518 If anyone had given offense the previous day, usually by being too argumentative, the youths in the morning rampage paid particular attention to the offender's hut. Cephu's camp of course came in for the most attention, and although Cephu complained loudly